

The Sustainable Development Goals Extended Report 2025

Inputs and information provided as of 30 April 2025

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



Note: This unedited ‘Extended Report’ includes all indicator storyline contents as provided by the SDG indicator custodian agencies as of 30 April 2025. For instances where the custodian agency has not submitted a storyline for an indicator, please see the custodian agency focal point information for further information. The ‘Extended Report’ aims to provide the public with additional information regarding the SDG indicators and is compiled by the Statistics Division (UNSD) of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Storylines presented in this document may slightly differ from figures cited in the SDG Report 2025 text due to the timing of the submission and the subsequent updates received upon finalizing the Report.

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Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes

Indicator 4.1.1 Proportion of children and young people (a) in grades 2/3; (b) at the end of primary; and (c) at the end of lower secondary achieving at least a minimum proficiency level in (i) reading and (ii) mathematics, by sex

Globally, 58% of students achieved at least the [minimum proficiency level](#) in reading at the end of primary in 2019

In 2022, as countries were still dealing with the lingering impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, nearly 700 000 students from 81 OECD Member and partner economies, representing 29 million across the world, took the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) test. According to [PISA 2022 results](#), between 2018 and 2022, mean performance in mathematics across OECD countries fell by a record 15 points while in reading fell 10 points, twice the previous record. On average, reading trajectories had been falling for a decade, though math had remained stable between 2003-2018. The unprecedented drops in mathematics and reading point to the shock effect of COVID-19 on most countries.

The PILNA 2021 results show a decline in student performance in both mathematics and reading compared to 2018, with mathematics experiencing a steeper decline. This suggests that external or regional factors between 2019 and 2021 disproportionately affected mathematics teaching and learning in Pacific schools.

SDG indicator 4.1.1 is being reported using various cross-national studies that are international ([PISA](#), [PIRLS](#), [TIMSS](#)) or regional ([PILNA](#), [SEA-PLM](#), [PASEC](#), [LLECE](#), [SACMEQ](#)) and share a single tool for participating countries. These tools have not been designed for SDG reporting but, in 2018, the Global Alliance to Monitor Learning ([GAML](#)) and the Technical Cooperation Group on SDG 4 indicators ([TCG](#)) agreed that these assessments could be used to report learning based on their proficiency levels that “mapped” best to the global MPL.

The production of comparable learning outcomes is not progressing fast and equally enough. Regardless of the coverage criterion (number of countries or population), coverage is much higher at the end of primary and end of lower secondary than for grades 2 or 3. Moreover, coverage of the learning indicator 4.1.1 by income groups is directly related to the level of income.

The UIS has focused on defining (i) the minimum proficiency level, aligning it to a competency concept that is independent of a particular assessment framework, specific items or tests, to allow reporting and (ii) a set of linking strategies to the proficiency framework.

Additional resources, press releases, etc. with links:

- UIS data browser: <http://sdg4-data.uis.unesco.org/>
- SDG 4 scorecard progress report on national benchmarks: focus on teachers: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388411>
- Resources: <https://gaml.uis.unesco.org/4-1-1/>

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[Custodian agency\(ies\):](#) UNESCO-UIS

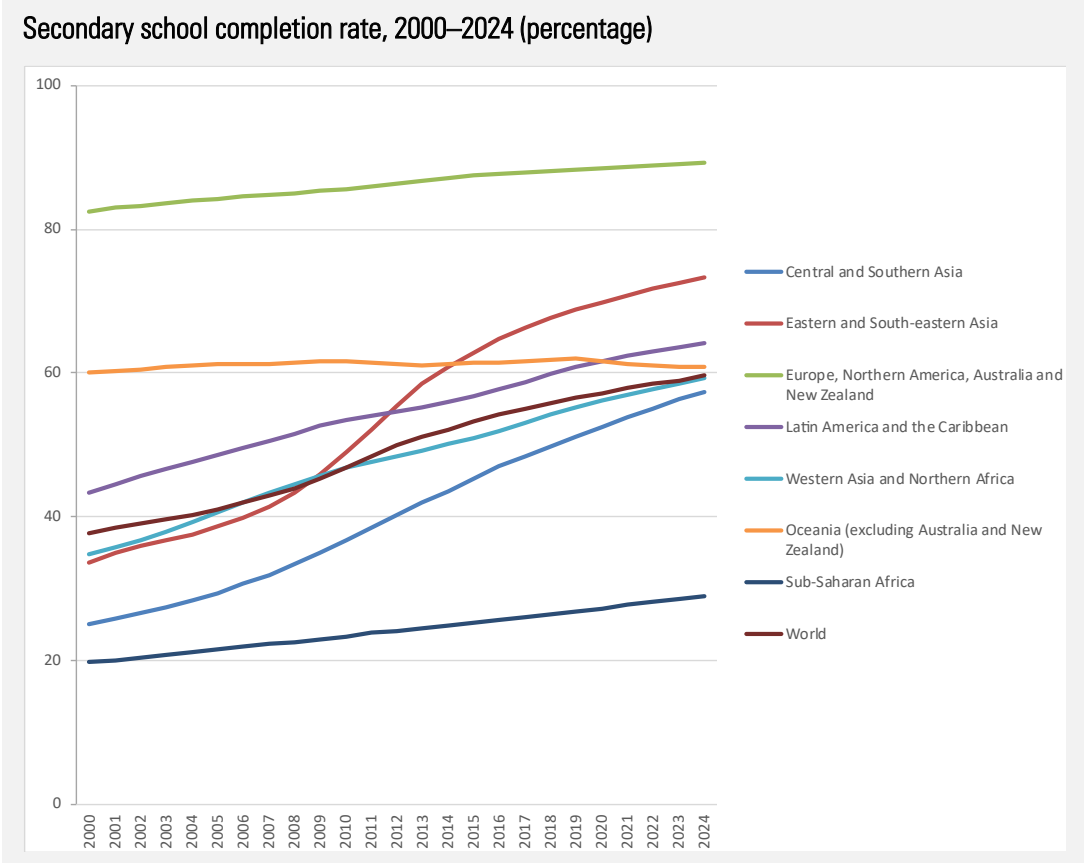
Indicator 4.1.2 Completion rate (primary education, lower secondary education, upper secondary education)

The percentage of young people completing upper secondary school increased from 53% in 2015 to 60% in 2024, slowing down relative to its progress in the preceding nine-year period

Globally, the completion rate reached 88% in primary, 78% in lower secondary and 60% in upper secondary education in 2024. These estimates are based on children, adolescents and youth aged 3 to 5 years above the official graduation age. In sub-Saharan Africa, barely two in three children complete primary school in time.

Progress has slowed down in upper secondary completion since 2015 from 1.3 percentage points per years between 2010-2015 to 0.8 percentage points per years between 2015–2024. Negative growth was seen in Oceania (reaching 61% in 2024). It slowed down in Central and Southern Asia and, especially, in Eastern and South-eastern Asia, although both of them are the fastest growing regions, as the upper secondary completion is almost twice as fast as the global rate. Upper secondary completion rates slightly accelerated in the last nine years in Latin America and the Caribbean (reaching 64% in 2024). Besides Oceania, growth was slowest in the regions closest (e.g. Northern America and Europe) and furthest (e.g. sub-Saharan Africa) from the target of universal completion.

Globally, girls’ completion rates exceed boys’ by 2 percentage points in primary and lower secondary education and by 3 percentage points in upper secondary education. Female completion rates first equalled or surpassed male completion rates in 2013 in primary and in 2014 in lower and upper secondary education. At upper secondary level, the gender gap at the expense of boys is 13 percentage points in Eastern and South-Eastern Asia, 8 percentage points in Latina America and the Caribbean, 5 percentage points in Northern Africa and Western Asia, and 4 percentage points in Europe and Northern America and Oceania. It remains at the expense of girls by 2 and 3 percentage points in Central and Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, respectively.



Additional resources, press releases, etc. with links:

- <https://education-estimates.org/completion/>

Storyline authors(s)/contributor(s): Global Education Monitoring Report, UNESCO

[Custodian agency\(ies\):](#) UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.2 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education

Indicator 4.2.1 Proportion of children aged 24–59 months who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being, by sex

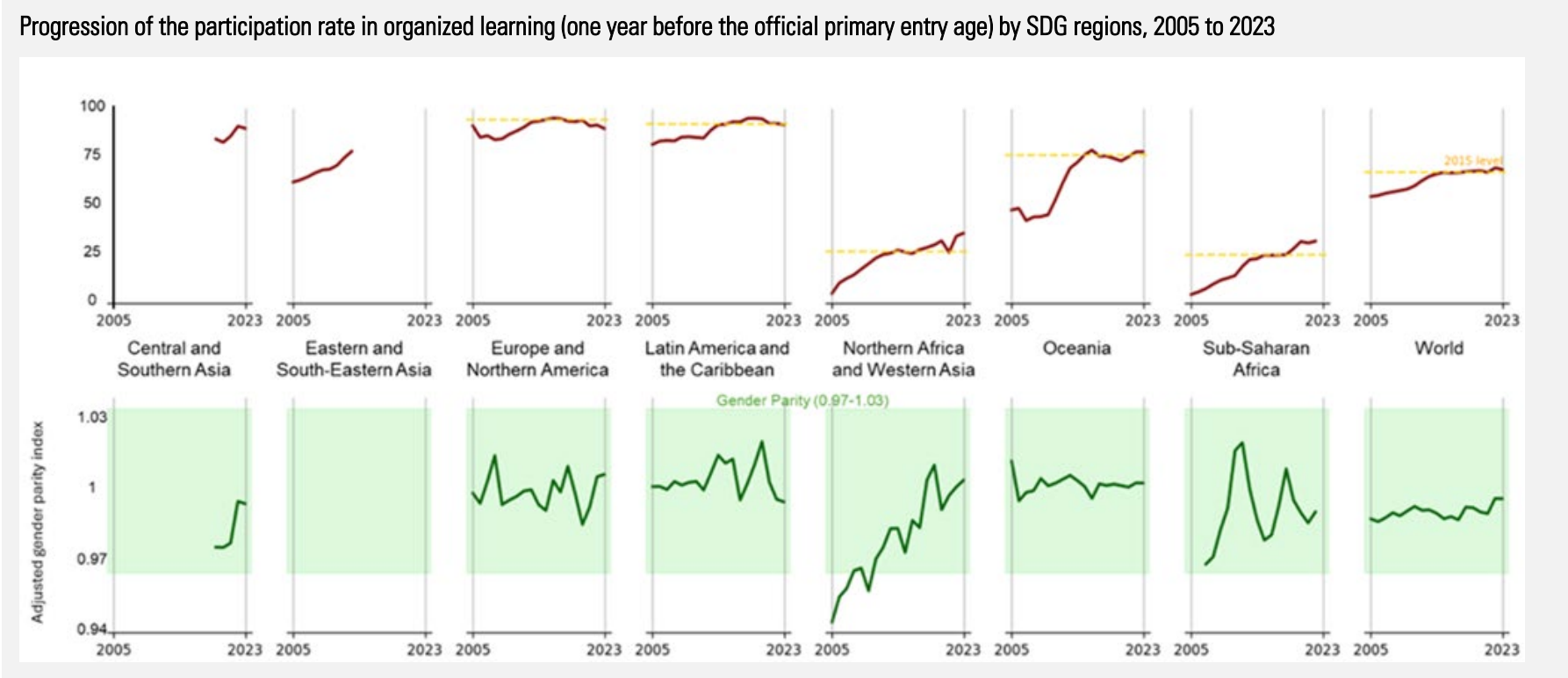
Custodian agency(ies): UNICEF

Indicator 4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex

Early childhood education must be enshrined in national legal frameworks

Participation in organized learning before entering primary school has stagnated globally since the Sustainable Development Goals were endorsed nearly a decade ago. In 2023, approximately 75% of children worldwide (74.7%) participated in organized learning one year before reaching the official primary entry age, a figure nearly identical to that in 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa (48.6%) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (51.4%) have the lowest participation rates among SGD regions. These two regions had previously made some of the fastest progress before the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted educational systems. The impact of school closures and social distancing is clear, reversing the growth in pre-primary participation achieved in the early years of the SDG agenda. For the most disadvantaged children, this setback is particularly detrimental, as pre-primary education is an essential tool for mitigating the cognitive and non-cognitive disadvantages associated with underprivileged home environments. Higher participation in pre-primary education is often linked to supportive legal frameworks that ensure equal access to organized learning opportunities before primary school. However, only about one-third of countries (66) have made at least one year of pre-primary education compulsory, and only half of countries (103) have legal provisions ensuring at least one year of free pre-primary education.

Establishing a legal guarantee for free and compulsory pre-primary education acts as a safety net, fostering school readiness and equalizing opportunities for cognitive and educational development in later stages. In countries lacking such legal guarantees, pre-primary education can be prohibitively expensive for families in low-income households, particularly in regions where private primary education is most common.



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Target 4.3 By 2030, ensure equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university

Indicator 4.3.1 Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex

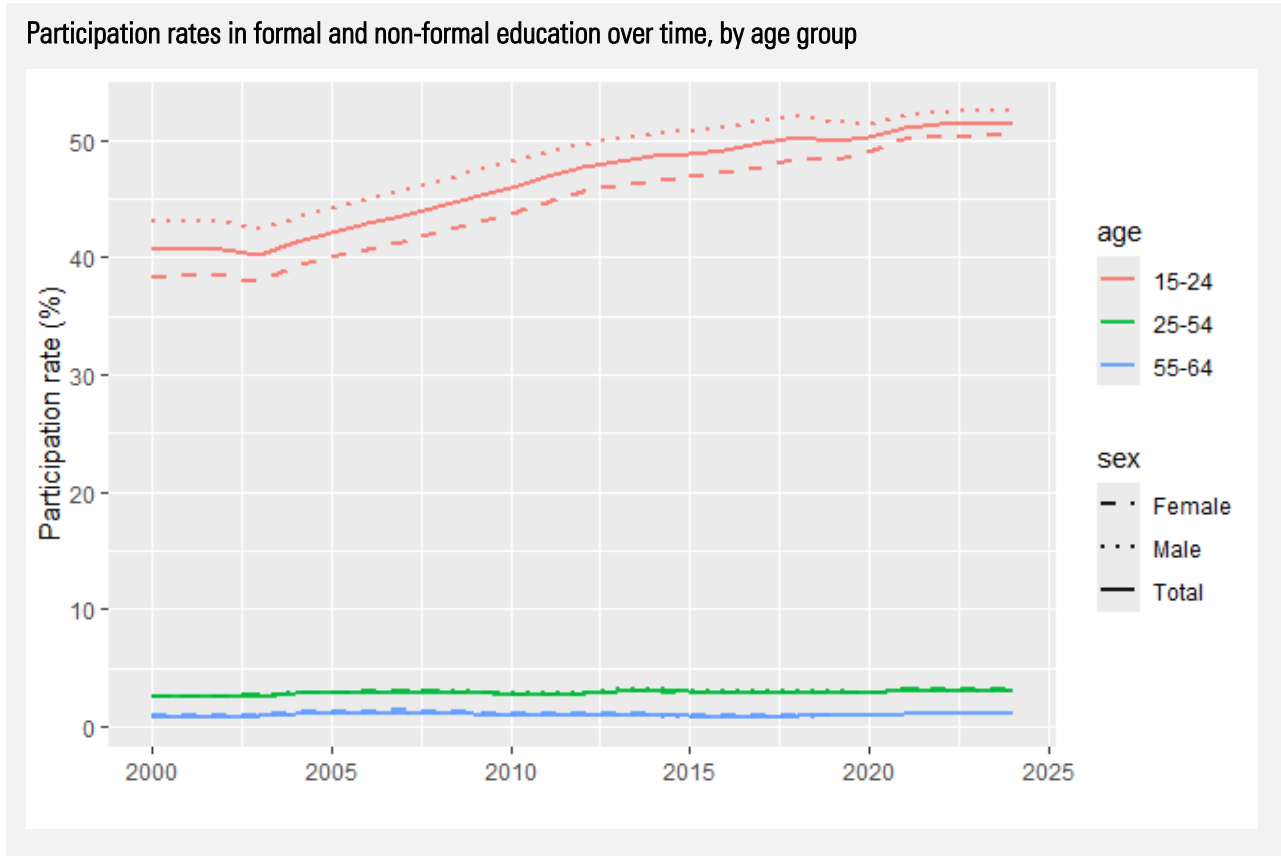
Over half of youth participate in formal and non-formal education, but very few older adults

Indicator 4.3.1 monitors participation in organized learning, encompassing both the formal education system and non-formal education such as adult literacy programs and work-based training. Globally one-sixth of individuals aged 15-64 recently participated in education or training. However, aggregate figures mask a bifurcation in participation between youth aged 15-24 and older adults. While over half of youth participate in education in training at the global level, only 3% of adults aged 25-54 and 1% of adults aged 55-64 do so.

Youth participation rates are relatively consistent across regions, remaining around 50% in 2024, with a minimum of 45% for sub-Saharan Africa. Oceania and Europe and North America report the highest participation rates at 58% and 64% respectively. For adults aged 25-64, rates range from less than 1% in Central and Southern Asia, to 8% in Oceania.

Participation rates among youth have increased over time, rising over 10 percentage points since 2000. The rate of progress has however slowed over time, rising less than three percentage points since 2015. At the regional level, Central and Southern Asia has made the most rapid progress over time, almost doubling participation among youth since 2000. North Africa and Western Asia, and Europe and North America follow, with participation rates increasing by 11 and 8 percentage points, respectively. For adults aged 25-54 and 55-64, participation rates have been flat since 2000, indicating persistent challenges in access and incentives for education and training among individuals more established in their careers.

Among youth, females tend to have lower participation rates than males on average. Although these disparities have narrowed since 2000, a two percentage point gap remains at the global level. However, patterns of gender inequality vary between regions. In sub-Saharan Africa and Central and Southern Asia, participation rates are substantially lower among females, with gender disparities reaching 8 and 7 percentage points, respectively. Conversely, in Europe and Northern America and Latin America and the Caribbean, females participate at higher rates than males, with respective disparities of 5 and 3 percentage points.



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Target 4.4 By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship

Indicator 4.4.1 Proportion of youth and adults with information and communications technology (ICT) skills, by type of skill

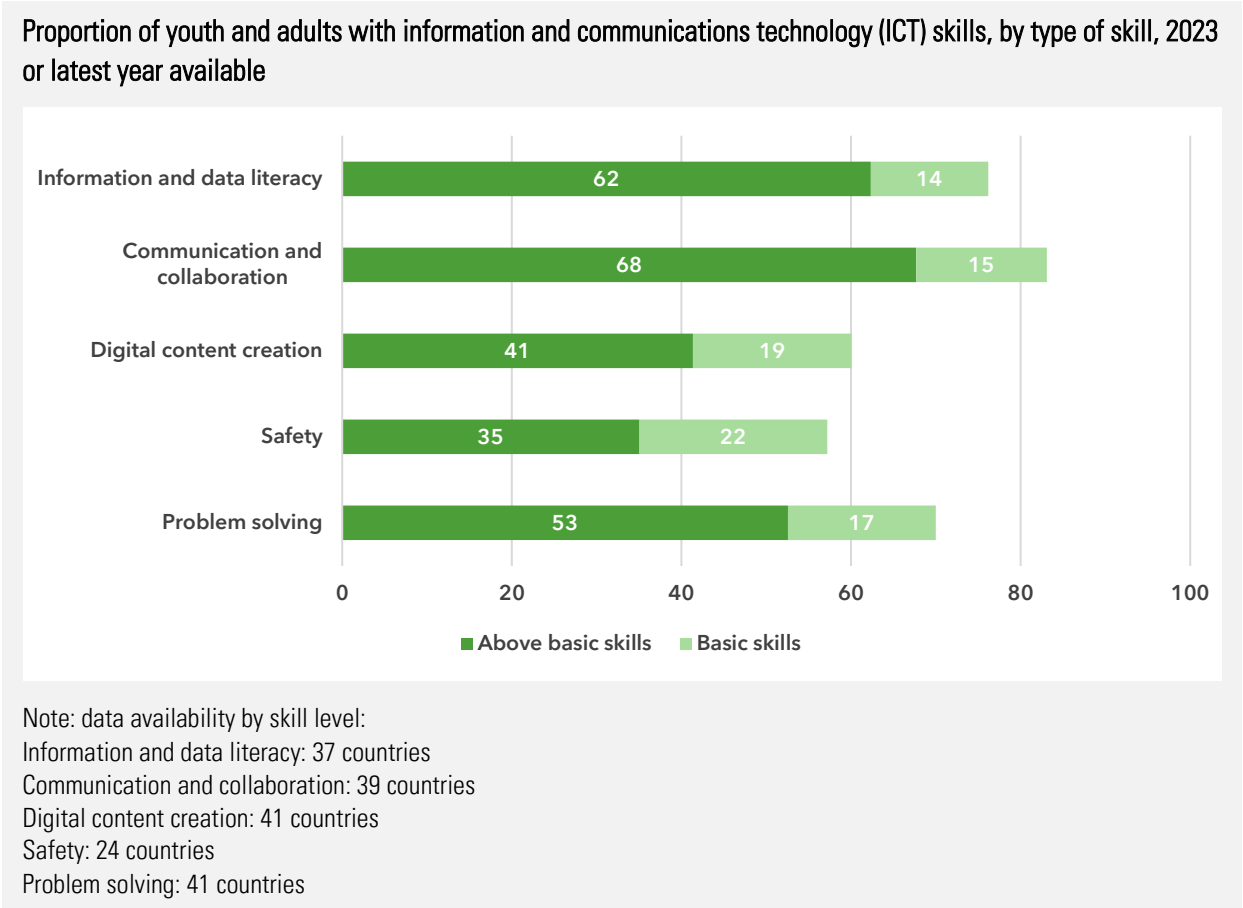
Great disparities in Internet users’ skillsets; strongest skills are in communication and collaboration

Because self-reporting of individuals’ ICT skills may be subjective, ICT skills are measured based on whether an individual has recently performed certain activities that presuppose a degree of proficiency in the relevant skills. These are grouped into five areas: information and data literacy; communication and collaboration; digital content creation; safety; and problem solving.

While the importance of digital skills in leveraging ICTs for economic prosperity and social well-being is well-documented, data remain very scant. Only 90 countries have submitted data since 2020, and rarely for all skill areas. Even fewer – just 40 countries – provide comparable data on ICT skill levels (see here for details on the methodology for calculating ICT skill levels).

Despite these gaps, certain trends in ICT skills are emerging. Communication and collaboration skills are the most prevalent, with 80% of Internet users reporting at least basic skills in this area. Information and data literacy is the second most prevalent skill area (76% of Internet users with at least basic skills), followed by problem solving (70%), digital content creation (60%) and safety (57%).

The relatively low level of skills in countries providing data contrasts with their high median share of overall Internet use, 90%. This gap between individuals using the Internet and those with digital skills demonstrates that many may be using the Internet without being able to fully benefit from it or avoid its dangers.



Additional resources, press releases, etc. with links:

- ITU (2024): Measuring digital development: Facts and Figures 2024, <https://www.itu.int/itu-d/reports/statistics/facts-figures-2024/>
- ITU (2025): Methodology for measuring ICT skills, [ICT skills \(February 2025 revision\)](#)

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Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS, ITU

Target 4.5 By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations

Indicator 4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated

Gender disparities in education remain persistent

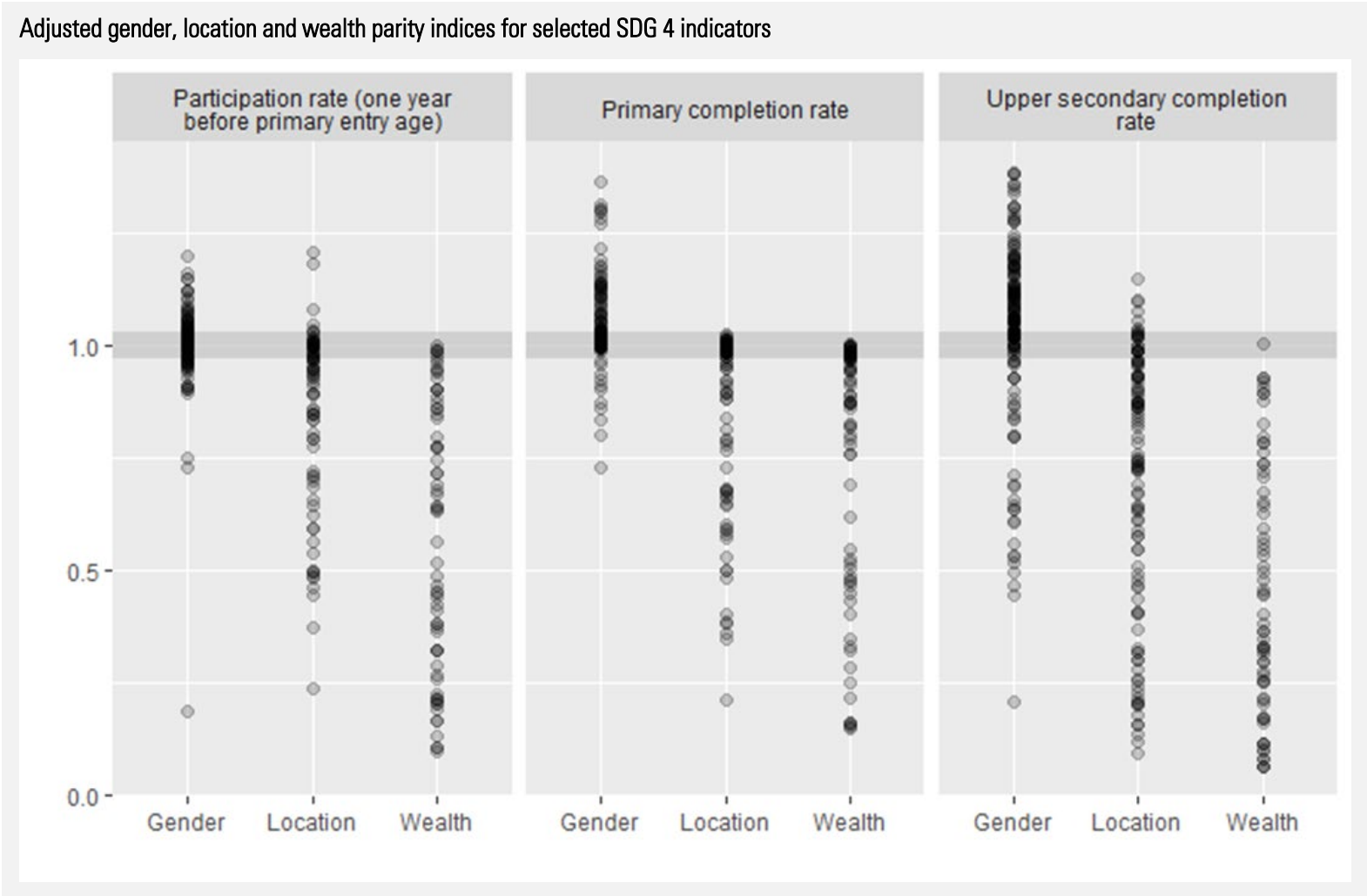
Education disparities in indicator 4.5.1 are measured by the ratio between population subgroups, adjusted to be symmetrical around 1.00, with a ratio between 0.97 and 1.03 indicating parity. Since parity ratios can vary above or below 1, their average can mask inequalities in countries. For example, the global parity ratio for indicator 4.2.2 - the participation rate in organized learning (one year before the primary entrance age) - was 1.00 in 2023, meaning 100 girls were attending organized learning for every 100 boys. However, among the 163 countries with recent data, 40% had not reached gender parity.

Gender disparities are evident in many other indicators. For example, four in ten countries with data do not meet gender parity in primary completion rates (indicator 4.1.2). This proportion increases at higher levels of education, with over half of countries at disparity at lower secondary age groups, and five in six at disparity for upper secondary age groups. At higher education, only one in twenty countries with data reaches parity for the tertiary education gross enrollment rate.

Gender disparities for educational participation and attainment tend to be to the disadvantage of boys in most countries with data. For example, among countries with disparities out of school rates, approximately 6 in 10 have disparities to the disadvantage of boys. For completion rates, boys are at a disadvantage in roughly three quarters of countries with disparities. For the tertiary gross attendance rate, the share is over 8 in 10. However, large disparities to the disadvantage of girls persist in a number of sub-Saharan African countries.

Patterns in gender disparities for learning outcomes are more varied. For the two-thirds of countries at disparity in minimum mathematics proficiency at the end of lower secondary, disparities are to the disadvantage of either gender in half of countries. In contrast, boys fall far beyond girls in reading proficiency. At the end of lower secondary, almost no country with recent data has achieved gender parity, with disparities to the disadvantage of boys in all of these.

Disparities typically increase when considering individual and household characteristics such as urban/rural location and household wealth. For example, for lower secondary completion rates, six in ten countries with data do not have parity between children from rural and urban households. Inequalities between children from rich and poor households are larger, with more than 90% of countries with data showing disparities. Moreover, parity ratios tend to widen at higher levels of education. The proportion of countries meeting gender parity in completion rates decreases progressively from the primary to upper secondary levels. For wealth disparities, only a single country with data achieved parity at the upper secondary level, compared to nearly a third for the primary school age group.



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Target 4.6 By 2030, ensure that all youth and a substantial proportion of adults, both men and women, achieve literacy and numeracy

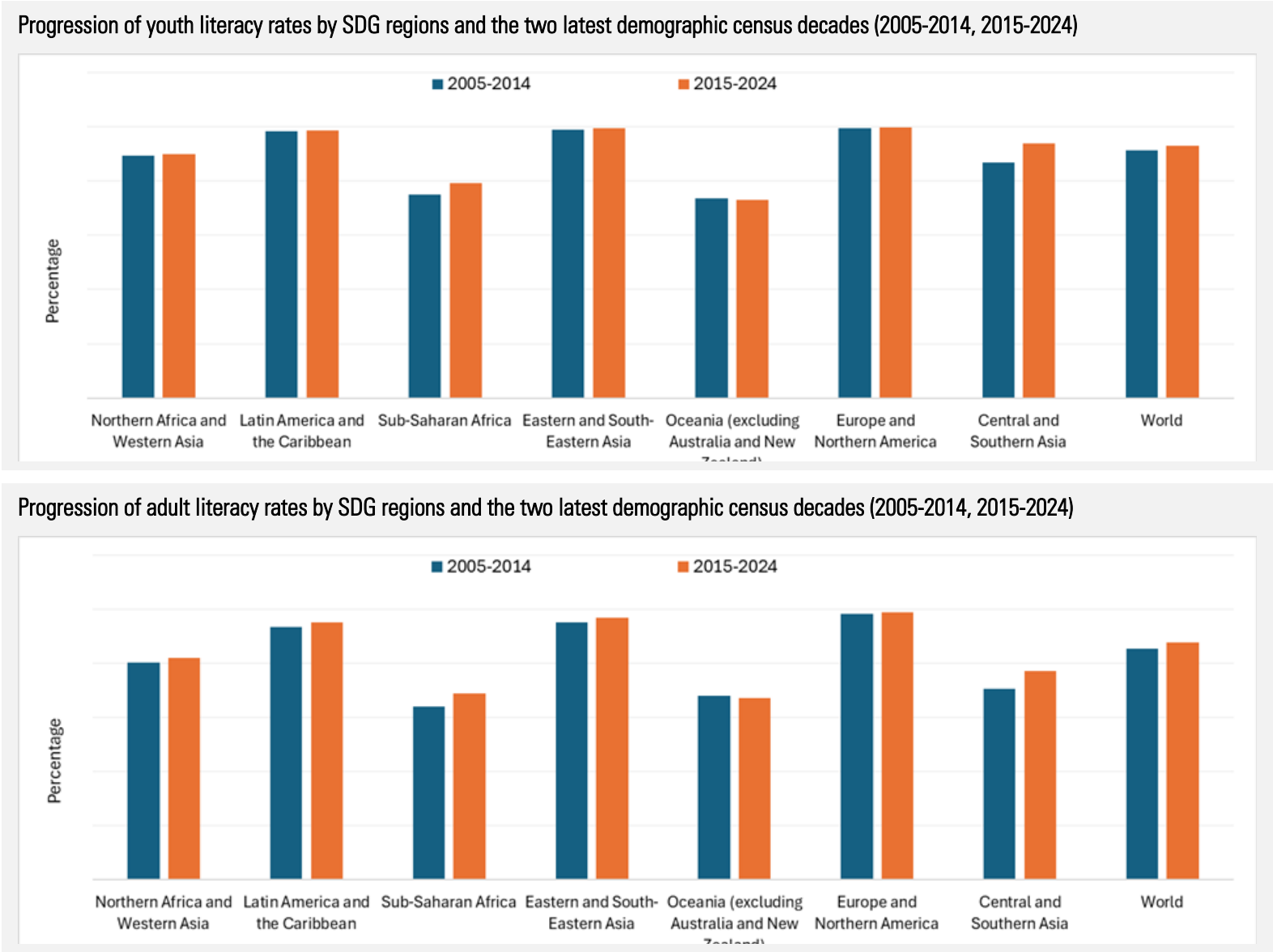
Indicator 4.6.1 Youth/adult literacy rate

Steady progress in global literacy, but regional disparities persist

Over the past two decades, significant progress has been made in literacy, with improved reading and writing skills and a steady reduction in gender disparities. However, 754 million adults worldwide remained illiterate in 2024, with women making up nearly two-thirds (63%) of this population.

Global literacy rates have continued to rise, reflecting broader advancements in education access. The youth literacy rate (ages 15–24) increased from 91% in 2014 to 93% in 2024, with Central and Southern Asia showing the most significant improvement (from 87% to 94%). Sub-Saharan Africa also made notable gains, rising from 75% to 79%, while Oceania remained the lowest-performing region at 73%, showing little progress. In contrast, Europe and Northern America maintain the highest literacy levels, consistently above 99%.

Similarly, the adult literacy rate increased from 85% in 2014 to 88% in 2024, with Central and Southern Asia again leading progress, rising from 70% to 77%. However, Oceania (67%) and Sub-Saharan Africa (69%) continue to face major challenges, highlighting persistent gaps in education systems and adult learning opportunities. Europe and Northern America sustain the highest and most stable adult literacy rates, consistently exceeding 98%, demonstrating the strength of their well-established education systems.



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Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.7 By 2030, ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development

Indicator 4.7.1 Extent to which (i) global citizenship education and (ii) education for sustainable development are mainstreamed in (a) national education policies; (b) curricula; (c) teacher education; and (d) student assessment

A green curriculum matters, yet efforts to mainstream key concepts vary a lot between countries

Mainstreaming content on sustainable development in the curriculum is part of national SDG and Paris Agreement commitments and has been linked with improved student knowledge. National curriculum frameworks and syllabi for up to eight science and social science subjects in each of grades 3, 6 and 9 have been reviewed in 110 countries for the frequency with which selected keywords are used in three themes: environment/sustainability; climate change; and biodiversity. The information has been compiled in an index with a scale from 0 to 100, with an average score of 40 and a range from 9 to 66. The average score is considerably higher for the environment/sustainability theme (55) than for the biodiversity (31) and climate change (21) themes.

Other relevant policy messages can be extracted. Despite commitments to cover greening issues in a balanced way, it is more common to find such references: in syllabi than in the national curriculum framework; in science than in social science subjects; and in higher than in lower grades. For instance, 34% of countries did not include green concepts in their grade 3 social science syllabi, compared to 21% in grade 6 and 16% in grade 9. Curricula in richer countries are not consistently greener than those in poorer countries. Countries which are deemed the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change do not necessarily include more green content in their syllabi. Countries willing to mainstream content on environment, sustainability, climate change and biodiversity in the curriculum can analyse the components of the indicator to identify where they can improve by domain, theme, grade and document type.

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Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO

Target 4.a Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all

Indicator 4.a.1 Proportion of schools offering basic services, by type of service

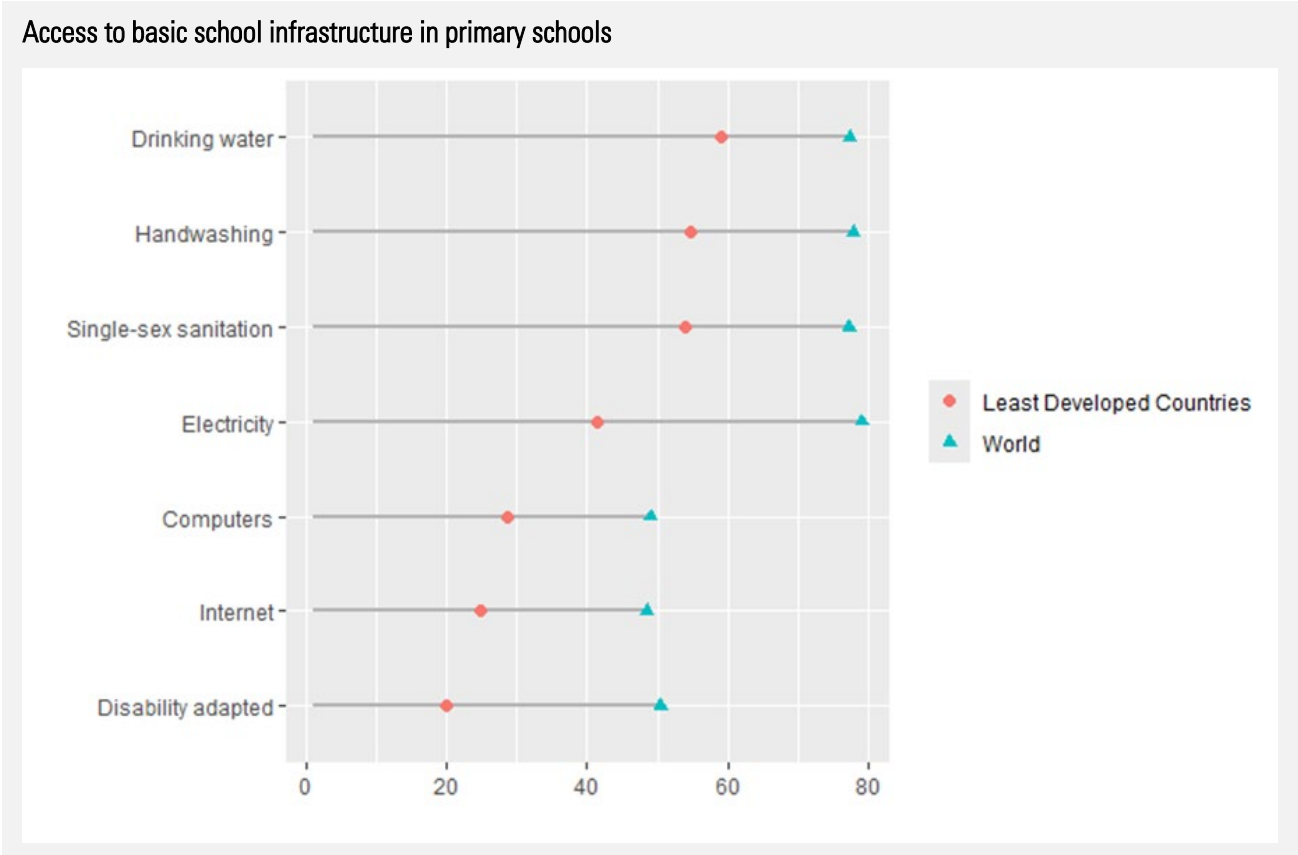
Basic school infrastructure is far from universal

Adequate school infrastructure is essential for enabling children to safely attend school and to facilitate a conducive learning environment. However, universal access to basic facilities is far from a reality. Over a fifth of primary schools globally do not have access to basic services such as electricity, drinking water and basic sanitation facilities. Availability of computers and the Internet for pedagogical purposes, and disability-adapted infrastructure is even lower, with less than half of primary schools having access at the global level.

Poorer countries, particularly the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), fall substantially behind the global average. Over a third of primary schools in LDCs lack access to basic sanitation, including drinking water, handwashing stations, and single-sex facilities. Limited electricity provision remains the norm, with more than half of schools in LDCs lacking access, and with over two thirds of schools without computers and the Internet for pedagogical purposes. Disability-adapted facilities—necessary for the participation of some of the most marginalized students—are particularly scarce, with only one fifth of primary schools in LDCs having access.

Despite these challenges, some notable progress has been made in expanding basic infrastructure over time. Since 2015, electricity access among primary schools has increased by over 10 percentage points at the global level. This progress has been driven by rapid expansion in Central and Southern Asia, where electricity provision increased by over 30 percentage points to 85% coverage. The provision of Internet within schools has exhibited a marked uptick since the COVID-19 pandemic, also driven by expansion in Central and Southern Asia.

Although starting from a higher baseline, the provision of universal basic sanitation in schools remains a challenge with limited progress at the global level since 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa has however made headway, with over 10 percentage points of growth since 2016.



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Custodian agency(ies): UNESCO-UIS

Target 4.b By 2020, substantially expand globally the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing States and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries

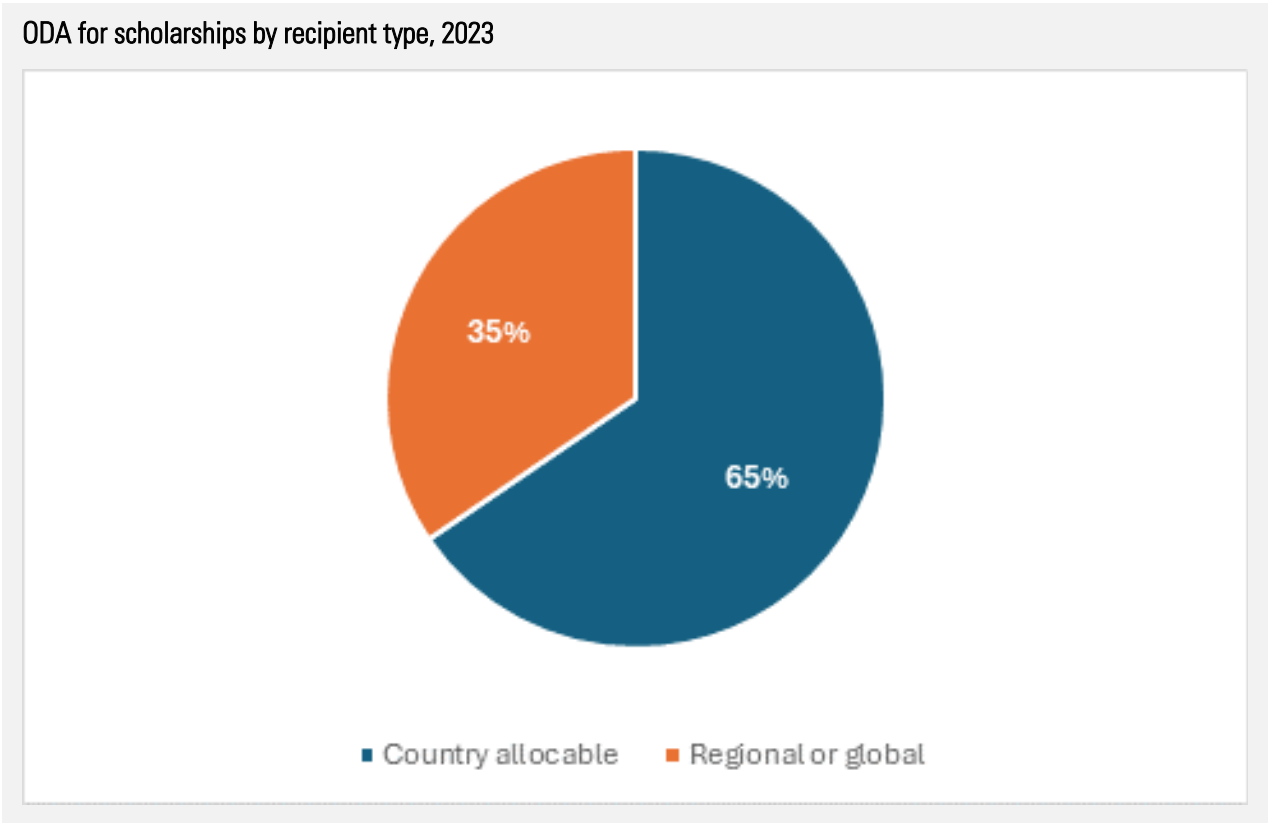
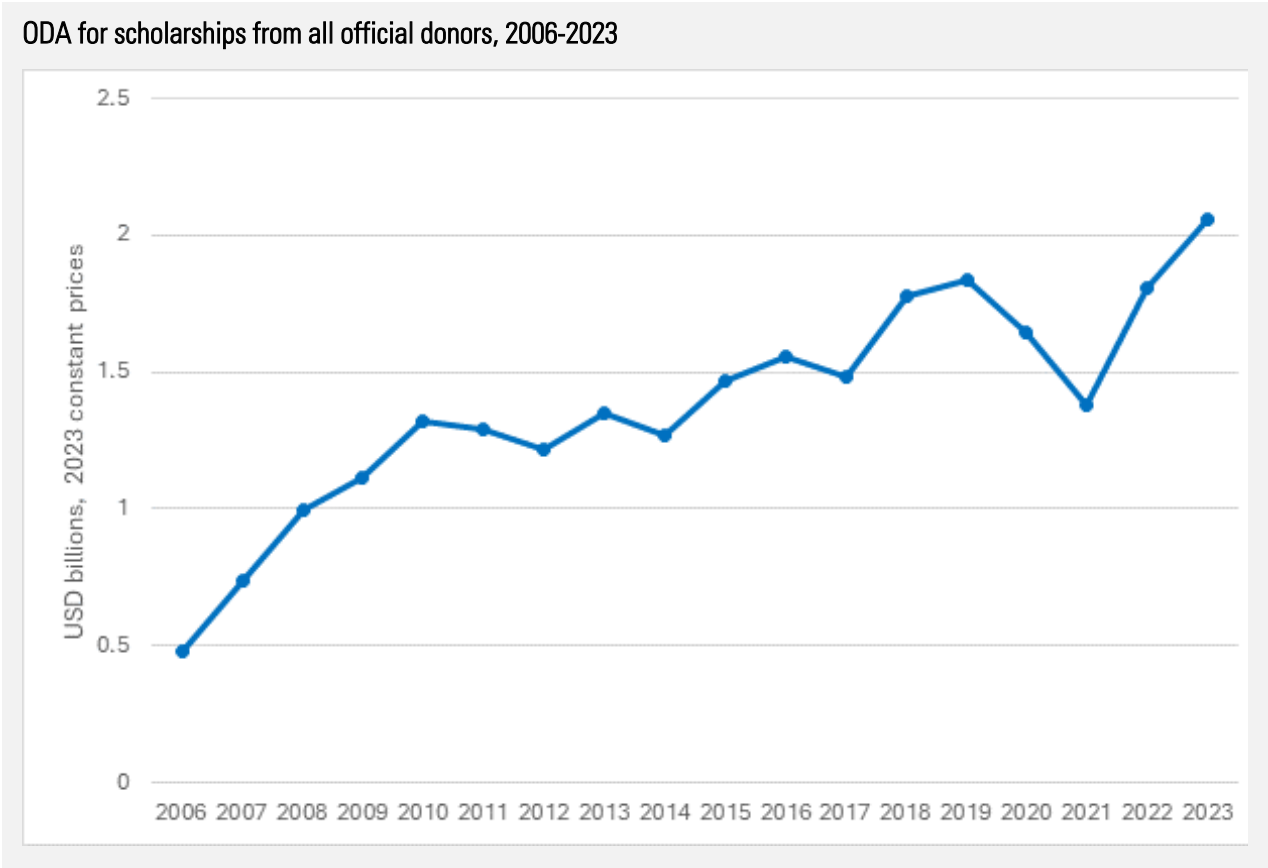
Indicator 4.b.1 Volume of official development assistance flows for scholarships

Official development assistance flows for scholarships reach new peak, surpassing pre-COVID levels

Official development assistance for scholarships reached a new peak of USD 2.1 billion in 2023, an increase of 14% from 2022. Funding for scholarships increased steadily from 2006 to 2019 before undergoing notable drops in 2020 and 2021, likely due to travel restrictions and school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic. As normality returned after these disruptions, ODA for scholarships recovered significantly in 2022 and then in 2023 surpassed the pre-COVID peak by 12%. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda in 2015, the volume of aid for scholarships has increased by 40%. Nevertheless, scholarships’ share of total official development assistance, though on the rise since 2021, remains lower than the 2019 peak of 0.7%.

The top provider of ODA for scholarships in 2023 was Saudi Arabia with USD 290 million, followed by the EU Institutions (USD 254 million), France (USD 231 million), Türkiye (USD 148 million), and Japan (USD 145 million). The largest recipient regions remained Asia and Africa. Just over one third of ODA for scholarships was allocated to regional or global recipients, but of the 65% that was allocated to specific beneficiary countries, the largest recipients were Indonesia, India, Moldova, Ukraine and Bangladesh.

While the vast majority (89%) of ODA flows for scholarships were classified under the education sector, the remaining flows fell under 19 other sectors including agriculture, government & civil society, health, industry and other multisector.



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Custodian agency(ies): OECD

Target 4.c By 2030, substantially increase the supply of qualified teachers, including through international cooperation for teacher training in developing countries, especially least developed countries and small island developing States

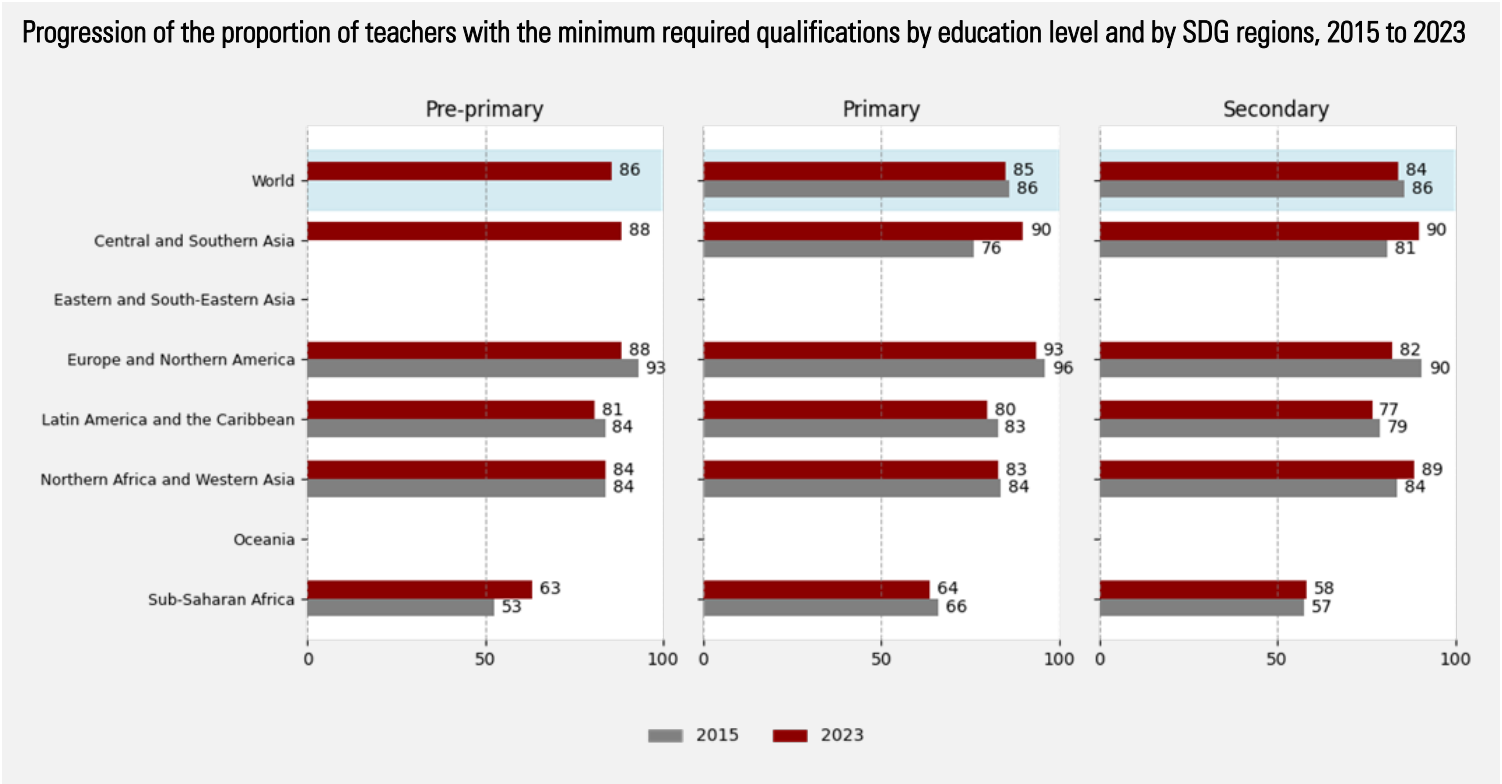
Indicator 4.c.1 Proportion of teachers with the minimum required qualifications, by education level

A significant number of teachers are not trained according to their country’s minimum standards

Any policy aimed at improving student learning outcomes must engage with and support teachers, as they are the most important school-based factor influencing children’s educational progress. Despite their critical role, insufficient attention has been given to increasing the proportion of teachers who meet minimum national qualification standards. This proportion has remained largely unchanged since the start of the Sustainable Development Agenda, with an average of 15% of teachers worldwide not meeting the minimum qualifications required in their countries. While this average holds across education levels, regional disparities are noteworthy. Sub-Saharan Africa had the lowest proportion of qualified teachers across all education levels, with only 6 out of 10 meeting minimum qualification requirements in pre-primary, primary, and secondary education, compared to 9 out of 10 in the highest-performing regions.

This lack of progress is further exacerbated by challenges in recruiting enough teachers to keep pace with enrollment increases driven by sustained demographic pressures. In many Sub-Saharan African countries, the number of students per trained teacher is now higher than it was in 1990, as national systems struggle to provide adequate pedagogical training for all teachers. Data from regional and international learning assessments show that teachers often lack in-service pedagogical support, coaching, and opportunities for continuous professional development.

A key challenge is the lack of comparability in national teacher training standards. There is no consistent association between the proportion of teachers trained according to national standards and internationally recognized levels of student learning. Addressing this issue of cross-national comparability has been identified as a priority by the international education community. Efforts are underway to complement ISCED-T, the international classification of teacher training programs, to enhance policy dialogue and improve the monitoring of teacher training and professional competencies.



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